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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue explore various aspects of the teaching of composition. Topics include the types of activities and research that rhetoricians will be doing in the future, areas in which composition research is needed, dealing with dialect differences in the composition classroom, and helping students to develop their writing skills through the writing of factual papers. Regular journal columns review a book about the evaluation of writing and discuss the development of effective K-12 writing programs. (GW)

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Donald Stewart, Editor

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

It is time for a changing of the guard. Therefore, I told the officers of KATE last Spring, as I accepted re-election to my fourth term as editor of *Kansas English*, that I would be willing to serve one more but that I believed we should now begin our search for my successor. I have been, more or less, the editor of the seventies, beginning in 1971 and continuing to 1979. During that time I have or will have served under five KATE presidents: Wes Keltcher, Erma Teichgraeber, Tom Hemmens, John Bushman, and Steve Hoyle. The job has been pleasant despite minor inconveniences and overall a good learning experience for me. But eight years is enough for one editor. We will need some fresh ideas, some fresh approaches. Therefore, I suggest these criteria in selecting a new editor: (1) experience as a published writer; (2) editing experience; (3) strong commitment to the service KATE is trying to give English teachers in Kansas; (4) national connections with people in the profession. One has to draw on them frequently.

If you wish to apply for this position, please send your credentials to Professor Nancy Vogel, Dept. of English, Fort Hays State College, Hays, Kansas 67601. Nancy is serving as Chairperson of the selection committee. If you wish to nominate someone, please check with the individual you wish to nominate to see that this person would be willing to serve, then send your nomination with appropriate credentials, to Nancy Vogel. Applications should be in by February 15, 1978.

Some Thoughts on Research in Rhetoric

W. ROSS WINTEROWD
University of Southern California

There was a time, not so many years back, when rhetoricians conceived of themselves as fairly traditional scholars, working in great libraries, thinking, writing—more or less in isolation. In the outward pattern of their activities, the rhetorician and the literary scholar were virtually identical. I am convinced, however, that the pattern is changing and must change, for the exigent questions that confront us now are best answered by empirical research. I am referring, of course, to the problems brought about by the "crisis" in literacy.

The activities of many rhetorical scholars will be quite different in the future from what they were or might have been in the past. For example,

(1) We will be concerned with valid research design.

(2) Often, we will be assembling teams of researchers, for many studies are simply too vast to be managed by one person.

(3) Funding—that becomes a major problem. We must learn to be as adept at fund-raising as our colleagues in the sciences and social sciences, for even a moderately large research project is often costly. (We need, of course, to become adept at the rhetoric of the funding proposal.)

(4) Many of us will be reaching out beyond the campus into the public schools and will be establishing long-term relationships with administrators and teachers.

A research project that colleagues of mine and I are just bringing to a conclusion might well be fairly typical of the kind of research that many, if not most, rhetoricians will be doing in the future. Here are some of the component problems of that project:

(1) Raising the initial funding, about $10,000.

(2) Training a group of public school teachers to participate, a process that took about four and a half months.

(3) Designing pre- and post-tests for 5,000 students involved in the research project and raising the money necessary for that testing, about $50,000.

(4) Designing and setting up language skills laboratories in six schools, for which we drafted a successful proposal in the amount of $60,000.

(5) Assembling a research team, including an expert in tests and measurements, a statistician, and a project coordinator.

(6) Providing new kinds of instructional materials, which we persuaded a commercial publisher to do on an experimental basis at no cost to the school district.

(7) Continual monitoring of the project by the director (myself), who also had full-time responsibilities on a university faculty.

W. Ross Winterowd is Professor of English and Chairman of the Composition Program at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. He is a frequent speaker at meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Mr. Winterowd is best known as the author of a number of composition texts, the latest being *The Contemporary Writer: A Practical Rhetoric*, 1975, by Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich.

And these are only *some* of the problems. Needless to say, in preparation for the research project, it was necessary to start with background research, the library work with which traditional scholarship often ends.

Another factor enters the picture: funding agencies and their deadlines and requirements. If you want to do costly research, you must, like Willie Sutton, go where the money is.

Again, I can illustrate with an example from my own experience. Some years ago, my colleagues, Betty Bamberg, Sylvia Manning, Robert Dilligan, and I began formulating plans to do an intensive analysis of the National Assessment of Educational Progress writing samples. Very quickly, we raised the small amount of money necessary to get our samples of the NAEP sample on tape, only about $12,000. However, the analysis that we proposed would cost somewhere in the neighborhood of $300,000, and a sum that large is not simply there for the picking. We spent countless hours in drafting and redrafting proposals, in contacting possible funding agencies (for instance, Sloan, Carnegie, and Mott), but without success. Then, quite unexpectedly, the National Institute of Education issued a call for proposals, the description of the research that NIE would fund sounded very like what we wanted to do with the NAEP samples, and we brewed some coffee, gathered our energies, and began redrafting our proposal to meet the NIE guidelines. Working under a strict deadline that loomed closer and closer, we made a concerted effort to get the proposal done—and I assure you, it is a complicated business to meet the formal requirements of a funding agency, to calculate a realistic budget, to get the proposal through the various layers of university administration, and even to get the manifold copies of the proposal run off and in the mail. (At this moment, 9:45 a.m. on Nov. 16, we think that we will meet the Nov. 25 deadline. But life never runs smoothly. I have had to divert my attention from the NIE proposal to an article on research that I some time ago promised to the editor of a publication called *Kansas English*. Readers who are interested in the funding sweepstakes may contact me in three or four months to learn the results on the proposal which is now in the works.)

Do you have a picture of the new kind of researcher in rhetoric? Rather an encouraging image, isn't it? After all, the thrust of rhetoric is outward, into the world of human affairs and problems, into what Burke calls the human barnyard. In acting like researchers, we are possibly merely acting like rhetoricians.

However, I warn you to take what I have said and what I will say with caution. I am giving a unilateral view of research, based on my own activities and interests, my own perspectives, and limited by my own limitations (of which I am largely unaware, for if I were aware of them, I would attempt to eliminate them).

As I see the field, here are some of the research problems that will concern us for the next decade.

Cerebral Hemisphericity

To be sure, the topic of hemisphericity (how the left and right brains function) is terribly faddish right at the moment. I have some evidence that Ornstein's *The Psychology of Consciousness* is now one of the most popular books among English teachers. Beyond mere faddishness, however, the subject is tremendously important for rhetoric, and I am convinced that work in brain research will have a profound

influence on both rhetorical theory and the teaching of writing. Merely characterizing in a general way what we know about the brain will suggest the importance of this work for our field.

Left Hemisphere

is good at *propositional* thinking;
contains the temporal sense;
is the languaging side of the brain;
is characterized by such adjectives as "rational" and "logical."

Right Hemisphere

is good at *appositional* thinking;
is holistic;
is imagistic;
is characterized by such adjectives as "intuitive" and "dark."

With a group of teachers in the Huntington Beach Union High School District, I am carrying on a research project to investigate the effects of hemispheric dominance on the writing of secondary students and ultimately to develop strategies, if possible, to bring about a greater degree of bi-hemispheric performance in their writing.

The point about brain research is this: a great deal of the basic knowledge has been assembled; researchers in composition/rhetoric need to apply it in controlled situations. It seems to me that a few basic readings are enough to suggest hypotheses for promising research: Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness; The Human Brain*, ed Whittrock; A. R. Luri, *The Conscious Brain;* Steven Rose, *The Working Brain*. Furthermore, I would suggest that rhetoricians begin "reading around" in the journal *Brain and Language*.

Testing

In my guts and my bones and my soul, *I* feel certain that *my* students make enormous progress as writers; that they become healthier human beings; that they become happier and more ethical—all thanks to a semester in my English 101. And it is not the case that *my* feelings are an excellent evaluation of *my* students? No one will ever convince me that they are not, but the problem is this: I have a hard time convincing others that they are. The world is so full of cynical skeptics who want evidence. It's a terrible world!

But we live in it, and thus we are confronted with the problem of evaluation.

I am a newcomer to the field of testing and evaluation and thus may well sound naive in my remarks concerning the subject; however, here goes.

My guess is that a major problem is the development of reliable, valid, and *economical* tests. Earlier in this discussion, I mentioned a locally developed test that cost about $5.00 per student. It was easy for us to demonstrate the test's reliability, more difficult to demonstrate validity, and impossible to norm on a statewide or national basis. The paradox is this: to norm the test statewide or nationally would be to create another Educational Testing Service. In other words, the tensions lie between local autonomy and the problem of norming. (School boards are concerned almost exclusively with norms.)

The whole problem of testing gets muddied by political and philosophical questions, the teaching-to-the-test syndrome being only one of the more obvious. Another is that tests or writing ability that involve actual writing are more expensive than multiple choice tests and, I understand, no more reliable or valid, but tests of writing ability that do not involve actual writing, though inexpensive, tend in their effect to devalue written composition and to push instruction back toward those destructive "basics" that have become a popular battle-cry of late.

So we need research in testing and evaluation, but generally we are ill-prepared to carry out such work.

Classroom Practices

One of Mina Shaughnessy's more memorable statements was this: Classrooms are like bedrooms. Participants go in and close the door. Then, when they come out, they tell you what great things happened. But we know very little about the sociology, psychology, and language games of the classroom.

Yet we can posit that successful teachers intuitively create classroom "scenes" in which effective learning can take place. We need to understand these "scenes" and how to create them.

Tentatively, I am positing that two "scenes" are necessary: one a workshop, in which "messy" activities such as adjusting to an audience take place, and a laboratory, in which "systematic" activities such as learning editing skills take place. As my colleague Steven Krashen said to me recently: I have a hypothesis that is testable. That is, I need to set up these "scenes," observe what takes place in them, and test to verify results or lack thereof.

Of course, the last paragraph is a bare-bones statement of an infinitely complex problem, but it illustrates my point: we need to posit instructional scenes and activities, observe what actually takes place, and then test for results.

In fact, my own university is a model for how difficult such activities can be. Classrooms are not designed for observation (with one-way glass and closed circuit television). Though we could observe, the whole physical plant discourages this kind of research. But even more than the physical plant, attitude is a block to research: the sanctity of the classroom, the denigration of teaching method over scholarship in a subject area, the reward system which finally gives nothing for brilliant teaching and everything for even mediocre publication.

These are some of the research ares that I am entering or that I hope to enter.

I would like to conclude this paper with an anecdote and a confession.

The anecdote. Recently I was talking with my dean, a brillian physicist, about research in composition. I mentioned this paradox to him: composition teachers are teaching the *process* of composing, and yet very little work has been done on the composing process. How, I asked him, would he go about learning how successful writers compose?

He paused for a moment, and then he said, "Why, I'd watch what they do, and then I'd ask them to tell me about what they had done."

As a humanist, my (ironical) response was automatic: "You see, that's the trouble with you scientists; you translate every problem into the observable. Any good

humanist would go to the library to find out what the tradition had to say and would base his or her conclusions of *that* kind of research."

My dean is merely an empiricist! Of course, he might get results. But, after all, aren't results beside the point?

The confession. This paper has been hurried in the writing, but long in the prewriting. These ideas have been germinating in my bald pate for several years. If the substance of the paper is not as useful as it might be, perhaps the attitude conveyed is salubrious. Perhaps I have demonstrated how one old-line rhetorician has changed his thinking and thus perhaps indicates something about the future.

How lovely it is to have a tradition as rich as ours—how essential. But how exciting it is to live in two worlds: that of the humanistic tradition and that of empirical research.

As we have known all along, rhetoric is the scholarly field *par excellence*.

Varieties of Voice:
A Proposal for Dealing with Dialect Differences in the Composition Classroom

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Manhattan High School

> We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.[1]
>
> Resolution of the Conference on College Composition and Communication—April, 1974

One of the by-products of the multitude of liberation movements which have swept the United States in the past two decades has been a growing awareness of language and its power to shape our perceptions of the environment and of the human beings who inhabit it. "Blacks" and "Afro-Americans" appear where Negroes and "colored people" once lived. "Native Americans" take the place of "Indians" and loudly resent being used as mascots for baseball teams. Women want "herstory" rather than history, and they question the use of masculine pronouns to generalize about the entire human race. And English teachers pass resolutions to prove that they agree with everyone.

Since black people are the most visible and largest minority in the United States (women are a majority!), much has been written about their dialect and its lack of acceptance in schools mostly peopled by middle-class white teachers and administrators. Much work has taken place in inner-city/ghetto schools to alleviate this problem, but little help has been given the teacher in schools with only small groups of minority children. The fact is that few teachers are trained to even recognize the features of any dialects which differ from "standard English," much less to accept them as valid linguistic systems.

This article does not pretend to offer universal solutions for problems in dealing with all dialects. Its purpose is simply to give some idea of the origins and features of Black English, to explain the reasons for its continued existence in spite of concerted efforts to eradicate it, to explore common teacher attitudes and methods of dealing with Black English in the schools, and to propose a strategy for dealing with Black English in a racially-mixed composition class.

Kathleen O'Fallon is Chairman of the English Department at Manhattan Senior High School.

What Is Black English?

The language which is spoken by Afro-Americans in this country has been variously designated as "Negro dialect" and "Negro Non-Standard English," but while the first term fails to recognize its existence as a full language system instead of a mere variation, the second implies that the system is "sub-standard." The term "Black English" seems the least stigmatized of those currently in use.

Black English originated on the Gold Coast of Africa in the sixteenth century, when British ships began to make trading expeditions to its ports. Rather than learn the African languages to make business transactions, the British forced the Africans to learn English. One Englishman, William Towerson, transported five Africans back to England in 1554 to be trained as interpreters. When three of them returned in 1557, they paved the way for English to become established as the trade language of West Africa. Thus, when the first slaves arrived on American soil they already had the beginnings of Black English.

The language which was spoken by these non-voluntary immigrants was what is referred to as "pidgin" English. That is, it was an incomplete, English-based lingo that was nobody's first language. As soon as the immigrants' offspring began to use this lingo as their first language, it graduated to the rank of a "creole." A creole language begins as a "pidgin" language which is used only in limited situations like bartering or asking directions in an unfamiliar country, but when the vocabulary increases to handle everyday encounters the "the pidgin" language becomes a "creole" language.[2]

The creole language of black Americans combines some African grammatical and phonological structures with the vocabulary of "standard" English. Because blacks and whites share the same words, the structural differences are more pronounced, and speakers of "standard" English assume that these differences are mistakes. This is a faulty assumption.

The structure of Black English follows rules just as "standard" English does. There are many differences which could be cited, but perhaps the following examples, one a phonological difference and one a grammatical difference, will suffice to illustrate the point:

A. Reduction of consonant clusters

In Black English, when words end in consonant clusters in which both consonants are either voiced or voiceless, the final member of the cluster is dropped. This may occur either when the consonants belong to the same base word or when the addition of *-ed* results in either a voiced or voiceless cluster.

Thus, *test* is pronounced *tes'* (voiceless pair), *build* is pronounced *buil'* (voiced pair), *looked* is pronounced *look'* (voiceless pair), and *rained* is pronounced *rain'* (voiced pair). The practice of dropping the *-ed* when it forms a consonant cluster in spoken Black English has often been mistaken as a failure to distinguish between present and past tense.[3]

B. Invariant Be

In Black English, the form *be* can be used as the main verb in a sentence without the variations *is, are, am, was, were* which are used in "standard" English. This occurs in two cases.

1. When the meaning "will be" is conveyed, the contraction for *will* (*'ll*) is often absent before *be*, because *be* begins a labial consonant. The contraction for *would* (*'d*) can merge with the *b* of *be* or be removed by the final *d* elimination rule. Thus, *He be here pretty soon* means *He will (or could) be here pretty soon.*
2. Use of *be* without tenses specification may mean "object or event distributed intermittenly in time." Thus, while *I'm good* asserts a permanent quality of the speaker, *I be good* means that he/she is good only intermittently.[4]

Black English began differently than "standard" English due to disparity in origin and variants in structure, but isolation actually caused the differences to be retained. Normally, languages differ because of geographical isolation, but historically the blacks in the United States have been isolated socially and legally.[5] Since the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, many of these legal and social barriers have been erased. Why, then, has Black English failed to melt into the mainstream of "standard" English?

There are three important reasons why black Americans cling to their variation of English. First, Black English is an identity label which solidifies a cultural and community bond. To deny Black English, at least in the home environment, would be to deny the cutural heritage of "blackness." Second, Black English is functional in the everyday environment. Why should a child discard a language which serves his needs for one which contains vocabulary and structures for situations which are totally irrelevant to his life? Finally, Black English is reinforced at home. Parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters all speak Black English (though varieties may differ according to age and sex), so that is the language which the child practices most often.[6]

Educational Attitudes Toward Black English

> From kindergarten through the elementary grades and to the end of the secondary grades, teachers have had one primary goal: eradicate the non-standard Negro dialect of disadvantaged black children and replace it with "correct" English. The failure to accomplish this goal is remarkable. Black children leave school at the end of twelve years still speaking the variety of English (the nonstandard Negro dialect) they spoke when they entered school. It would seem that this remarkable failure to get these children to speak like middle-class people (that is, to speak standard English) would have caused a reexamination of the attitudes and assumptions upon which the language program are based (sic), and to alter teaching strategies subsequent to this reexamination. No such reexamination, however, took place until recently, and then it was the linguists, not the educators, who took the lead in conducting the reexamination."

In the past, there has been only one variety of English which is acceptable in the schools—white middle-class standard English á la Walker Cronkite. This belief gave rise to the "verbal deprivation" theory of teaching, which viewed black children as non-verbal savages who could only be saved by missionary-teachers converting them to the miracle of STANDARD ENGLISH. This highly satisfying (to the white teacher) theory has been, needless to say, a flop. Most advanced (?) thinkers, therefore, have recently espoused the "standard English as a second language" theory. This

theory has met with more success and acceptance by the black community than the first one, but it still does not seem to be the answer to the "problem." Closer examination of the assumptions upon which these two theories are based and the resulting teacher and student behavior may give some insight into the reasons for their failure.

According to linguist William Labov, the "verbal deprivation" theory of English ". . . diverts attention from real defects of our educational system to imaginary defects of the child."[8] This theory is based on several false assumptions.

1. *Because Black English is inferior to standard English, the cognitive development of Black English speaking children is impaired.* This assumption is based on the observation that many black children begin school without the same cognitive skills that white children have. However, children develop those cognitive skills which are needed in their environment. Black children have the skills which are demanded by their own culture, but they are tested on tasks which are oriented to the white middle-class culture. In the eyes of their white teachers, skill differences become skill deficiencies.

2. *Black English speaking children are non-verbal.* This assumption is coupled with the idea that the mothers of black children do not speak to them. Actually, the black culture is highly verbal, and ability to speak well is a status symbol. Unfortunately, because black children are continually corrected by their teachers and the discussion topics in the classroom are mostly irrelevant to their needs, background, or interests, they learn not to say anything. Thus, they are labeled non-verbal.

3. *Black English is the result of "lazy lips and lazy tongues."* This variation of the stereotyped "lazy nigger" is, to put it bluntly, unfounded and racist.

4. *Black English is simply "sloppy," error-riddled standard English.* This assumption implies that differences are erratic and occur only on an individual basis, when, in fact, the differences between Black English and standard English are systematic and consistent.

5. *Black English speakers have poor auditory discrimination skills.* This assumes that black children are not able to hear correctly the sounds of standard English. Actually, studies with black children have demonstrated that they are able to translate standard English phrases into the correct Black English equivalent very quickly, which would indicate that they do indeed hear and understand the standard forms.

6. *Black English is an attempt to simplify standard English.* While it is true that some Black English forms are simpler than standard ones, others are more complex (note "invariant be" discussed earlier).

All of the above assumptions are based on one notion, that difference equals deficiency. Teachers who adhere to the "verbal deprivation" theory feel it is their sacred duty to replace Black English with "standard" English. In its mildest form, this level of teaching leads to the lowering of the black child's self-esteem. In its worst form, this theory can lead to racism and a belief in the genetic inferiority of black children.

Opponents of the verbal deprivation" theory who still see a need for black children to learn standard English as an "alternate" language, have devised the "standard English as a second language" theory. This theory allows the child to keep

his own dialect, but it assures him that he also needs to know standard English for vocational, social and academic success. The assumption—white middle-class speakers are still writing the job applications, party invitations and public school curriculums. No suggestion is made that white students need to learn Black English for any kind of success.

The "second language" theory advocates adapting the teaching techniques used with foreign languages to the teaching of Black English. This is somehow a very comforting theory, because it allows acceptance of forms which we commonly consider "non-English." For instance, if one can accept the double negative form in French ("Je n'ai rien"), one can accept it in "foreign" Black English ("I don't have nothing.").

Ultimately, both theories are operating from the same premise, as Geneva Smitherman aptly explains:

> Yet when it comes to the Black English classroom, English teachers are working out the same old traditional bag of eradicationist (attempting to obliterate Black English) or, more recently, bidialectist (attempting to teach Black students the skill and necessity of being versatile in both the dialect and "the Man's"). Of course, when you get right down to the nitty gritty, it ain't no essential difference between the two inasmuch as both bees operating on a difference equals deficit model; the latter is simply more sneaky about making this assertion. (Dig it: white middle class kids don't have to be "versatile" in Black English.)[10]

Now What?

For an English teacher in a small Kansas town with a relatively small black population, the failure of the above theories evokes a small feeling of smugness. After all, neither theory would be even remotely practical in classes which have, at most, two or three black students. The only possible way of "eradicating" Black English would be through constant verbal correction (which would be degrading to both teacher and student) or profuse mechanical correction of written work (a tedious process for the teacher and a devastating experience for the student who receives its bloody result). Therefore, I see the need for a theory of teaching English to students of all races which is (a) non-judgmental, (b) respectful of individual differences, and (c) aware of similarities. I believe a composition course which proceeds from a linguistic conception, gives "equal time" to the spoken varieties of American English, and attempts to identify and intensify the writing "voice" of individual students who fulfill all of the above requirements.

In an article called "Black English," Johanna DeStephano identified several benefits of a linguistic approach to language study:

1. It does not make judgments on the adequacy or inaduquacy of a language's ability to convey concepts.
2. It accepts the fact that different varieties may express the same concept in different ways.
3. It assumes that any given language variety meets the needs of its speakers.
4. It does not accept one way of saying something as inherently better than another.[11]

In addition, the linguistic approach to English is simply more interesting than the

old traditional grammatical approach. Since linguistics is a descriptive rather than a prescriptive study, it would allow the students to see their language as living, changing process, not as a set of sterile "do's and don'ts."

By giving equal time to all varieties of American English, a teacher may enhance individual self-esteem, promote understanding among races, and motivate an individual's contribution to the class.

A black student who has been told since kindergarten that the language of his nurture is "incorrect" has probably begun to believe it. It only follows that the student himself must then be "incorrect" or "worthless." Self-esteem hits rock-bottom, especially if the child does not have enough positive reinforcement at home to counteract the effects of school. Imagine how that child's opinion of himself might change when he saw the words and structures of *his* language beginning to appear on the blackboard as something besides examples of the "wrong" way to do things. Surely he would feel just a little special when the class began to study the word games he plays so well—"bantering," "playing the dozens," "pimp talk."[12]

Multi-lingual studies might also promote understanding among races. Language is, after all, indicative of world view. Suppose, for example, a white student had recently attended a concert by black performers which attracted a nearly all-black audience. The student wanted to hear the music, but was annoyed by blacks singing, shouting, clapping and dancing in the aisles. At this point, the white student may be introduced to the sociolinguistic element in black culture which dictates reaction (verbally and physically) to performers. In the black world view, "(The performer's) task is not to make a thing, but to bring about an experience in which not only his creative energies but the vitality of others may find expression."[13] If the audience had not reacted in the manner they did, the performance would have been considered a failure. Comprehension of this idea may not make a white student any happier about not being able to hear the concert, but at least he will know the behavior is acceptable within that cultural situation, and he will know to avoid concerts by black performers unless he can learn to adjust to the situation.

Study of differences in languages may also promote better understanding between teachers and students of different races. For example, Black English contains only one means of refusing the demands of an authority figure. Thus, when a white teacher says, "Johnny, sit down," the black child refuses with a flat, "I won't!" However, a white child controls (linguistically) more than one mode of refusal. Standard English contains several preconditions for the statement:

The preconditions are:

A (the originator of the command) believes that, at time T,

a. X should be done.
b. B has the obligation to do X.
c. B has the ability to do X.
d. A has the right to request that B do X.

The white child knows he can refuse "partially" on the basis of any of the first three conditions without immediate retaliation by the teacher, because he still has left the door open for further negotiation. Only the last, which is an open challenge to the teacher's authority, is outright defiance; however, the black child's blunt refusal (for

whatever motive) is immediately construed as definace.[14] If the teacher is aware of the linguistic motive behind the black child's "defiance" of the command, doors may be reopened to negotiations and misunderstandings may be avoided. This will probably mean fewer trips to the principal's office for the child.

It is common practice in many composition classes to work with development of individual style or "voice," and it seems an excellent strategy for allowing students the "right to their own . . . language." As defined by Dr. Donald C. Stewart, an "authentic voice" is:

> . . . that authorial voice which sets you apart from every living human being despite the number of common or shared experiences you have with many others: it is not a copy of someone else's way of speaking or of perceiving the world. Because you were born at a certain time, in a certain place; to certain parents, with a particular position in the family structure, you have a unique perception of your experience. All the factors of your environment plus your native intelligence and particular response to that environment differentiate you from every other person in the world. Now the closer you come to rendering your particular perception of your world in your words, the closer you will come to finding your authentic voice.[15]

In developing their "authentic voices," black students would be given an opportunity to use language the way they use it in their everyday world, not the way their white teacher uses it. Teachers could help black students to be consistent in their usage, to have pride in the vivacity of their speech and the uniqueness of their perceptions, and to desire to be accurate transmitters of their culture through their language.

Once "authentic voice" is on its way to fruition, the teacher might ask black children to write "standard" English and white children to write Black English. Not only would this make the children aware of how difficult it is to shift languages on command, but it would heighten awareness of linguistic complexities and perhaps evoke respect for students' abilities to speak their own languages.

It is not enough for English teachers to draft resolutions about "students' rights" unless they have some specific means in mind to end linguistic discrimination. Teachers must be re-educated with emphasis on linguistics, for they can never encourage Black English if they can't even recognize it. Finally, community members and administrators must realize that there is a place in the public schools for *all* varieties of spoken and written English. We can no longer ask black students to ". . . surrender their power and a good part of their identity and just hand it over to the English teacher."[16]

NOTES

[1]Committee on the CCCC Language Statement, "Students' Right to Their Own Language," *CCC Special Edition*, Fall 1974, pp. 2-3.

[2]Brother William J. Thomas, "The History and Structure of Black English," *Two Papers* (New York, 1972), p.6.

[3]Ralph W. Fasold and Walt Wolfram, "Some Linguistic Features of Negro Dialect," in *Language, Society and Education: A Profile of Black English*, ed. Johanna S. DeStephano (Worthington, Ohio, 1973), pp. 118-119.

[4]Fasold, pp. 134-135.

[5]Brother William J. Thomas, "Black English," *Two Papers*, (New York, 1972), p.3.

[6]Kenneth R. Johnson, "Teacher's Attitude Toward the Nonstandard Negro Dialect—Let's Change It," in DeStephano, p. 187.

[7]Johnson, p. 178.

[8]William A. Labov, "The Logic of Nonstandard English," in DeStephano, p. 11.

[9]Johnson, pp. 178-184.

[10]Geneva Smitherman, "English teacher, why you be doing the thangs you don't do?" *English Journal*, LXI (January 1972), 61.

[11]Johanna S. DeStephano, "Black English," in DeStephano, pp. 7-8.

[12]Johnson, p. 183.

[13]Roger D. Abrahams, "The Advantages of Black English," in DeStephano, p. 102.

[14]William A. Labov, "Modes of Mitigation and Politeness," in DeStephano, p. 111.

[15]Donald C. Stewart, *The Authentic Voice* (Dubuque, Iowa, 1972), pp. 2-3.

[16]August Franza, "Intercourse Now!" *English Journal*, LXIV (December, 1975), 10.

INTERLOCHEN, Mich. — High school students are invited to submit poems and short stories to the 1978 National Youth Writing Competition. This new writing contest, sponsored by the Interlochen Arts Academy closes on February 15, 1978.

Winning entries in both fiction and poetry will receive a first prize of $100.00, a second prize of $50.00, and a third prize of $25.00. Prize-winning poems will be published in the prestigious *Interlochen Review*, a journal of the finest high school writing in the nation.

To receive contest rules for the National Youth Writing Competition, please contact the Literary Arts Division, Interlochen Arts Academy, Interlochen, Michigan 49643.

Facts Before Judgements:
Thoughts About Teaching Composition

THOMAS M. SAWYER
University of Michigan

Paper presented at the National Council of Teachers of English Secondary Section in Boston, Massachusetts, 3 April 1976.

I am very pleased and honored to have been invited to speak to you at this meeting. In a sense I have returned to my beginnings. My very first teaching job, one year after my graduation from college, was to teach English composition at the 9th, 10th, and 11th grade level. My students were all boys, and they were nearly all bilingual because they came from a variety of ethnic stocks—Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, Portugese, Hawaiian, and Caucasian. My first day of teaching still remains vivid in my memory as an unmitigated disaster. Ten minutes after the start of my first class I had taught every last thing I knew—I had nothing left to say, not for the rest of the hour, the rest of the week, the rest of the year.

And this was not particularly surprising because during my undergraduate education at Kenyon College I had specialized in Biology. I could breed fruit flies, dissect cats and frogs, and make slides of various tissue cultures, but I had taken just three courses in English: Freshman Composition, a course in Literary Criticism, and a course in Creative Writing. It was because of these last two courses that I wound up at Iolani School in Honolulu, Hawaii, teaching English composition. The criticism and creative writing courses were taught by John Crowe Ransom and the only reason that I took them was that he was the "big name" on Kenyon's faculty. I enjoyed his courses all right and concentrated on writing poetry because poems were short and took less time to write than stories or plays, but I didn't do so well as my classmates, Robert Lowell, who went on to write more poems after graduation, or Robie Macauley who is now the fiction editor of *Playboy* magazine.

But when I graduated in 1939 no one wanted a biologist, so I went to work as a machinist in Toledo, Ohio, at 50 cents an hour, 12 hours a day. Then one day the Alumni Secretary of Kenyon College wrote that there was a job open in Honolulu teaching prep Biology. Would I care to apply? With visions of palm trees and hula girls I promptly dispatched my application and requested letters of recommendation from the head of the Biology Department, the President of the College, and, just to provide balance, from John Crowe Ransom.

A month went by, then came a cablegram: "Offer you position teaching English. Nine hundred dollars per year and found." I was baffled. I was a Biologist, not an English major. But I was willing to do anything to get out of Toledo, Ohio.

It turned out that by the time my application arrived the Headmaster had already hired a Biologist, but shortly thereafter he had fired an English teacher for making passes at his nubile daughter, and out of desperation seized upon Ransom's recommendation and hired me as a replacement.

Thomas M. Sawyer, a Professor of English in the Department of Humanities in the University of Michigan's College of Engineering, is a frequent speaker at meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication. He is known as one of the most pedagogically innovative members of the profession.

I tell you this because the only formal training in teaching English composition I ever had came from Headmaster Stone and I find that I still follow his precepts. He had served as a missionary in China and held that the only way to teach the English language to those who did not know it well—and he was sure that no 9th, 10th or 11th grade boy could possibly know it well—was to require the boy to write a composition every single week. Now I taught five classes a day, five days a week, four in English the other in Current Events, and there were 30 boys in each class. That meant that Headmaster Stone expected me to assign, and moreover to read, mark up, and grade, 120 compositions, every week. To make sure that I assigned those compositions, he required me to turn in to him a detailed set of lesson plans for each class at the start of each week. And he wanted to see *how* I marked up those compositions, so I was asked to submit sample sets of compositions to him at frequent intervals. Moreover, at least once a month he came into the classroom of every teacher on his staff and sat through the class hour to see how the teacher handled the class. I am afraid that I saw a great deal less of the white sands and the hula girls than I had counted on. But my Hawaiian students had it easy compared to my eight year old son who, when we spent a Fulbright year in Pakistan, was under the tutelage of a teacher born and reared in Yorkshire, England. *She* made every one of her second grade students write a composition every single night and take a spelling test every single day.

I still believe that the only successful way to teach any art, and writing is an art, is through practice, constant practice. Further, this practice must be subject to tough, upsparing criticism. Today I teach three composition classes instead of the four I taught in Hawaii, and I have fewer students in each class, but I still require either a composition or speech every week, and I still mark up those compositions in detail, trying to catch every spelling error and suggesting revisions for every poorly organized sentence.

My students now are, of course, very different from those high school students I started out teaching and very different from most of the high school students you teach. The key difference between my senior engineering students and your high school students is that mine are specialists who know more about the subject they are writing about than I, the English teacher, do and more than the rest of their reading audience will know as well. My job is to help them make what they are talking about clear and persuasive to whoever reads their reports. If I can't understand what they mean, the chances are excellent that other people won't be able to understand it either. Thus, many times a class meeting turns into a session where I am the only student and the group of undergraduate engineers are teachers trying hard to pound into my thick skull why a higher frequency range in a radio signal means a larger bandwidth and consequently a greater channel capacity.

The writing that I deal with is thus almost entirely devoted to the analysis and presentation of *facts*. This does not mean that judgment statements and conclusions are excluded. Quite the contrary. The reports that these engineering students write are most frequently concerned with an experimental investigation or with a design—the design of a ship, an aircraft, a chemical plant, a biomedical device, an electronic circuit. They are engaged in answering the question: "What, in your judgment, is the best way to solve the following problem?" This is the question posed them by the engineering professors in the student's senior-level courses. My task is to help them

write a good answer. That answer must be solidly based on factual evidence, persuasively presented. Otherwise the report will be a failure. And I am personally concerned that this report be thorough and honest and competent because someday I may fly in an aircraft, sail in a ship, or be dependent upon a biomedical device designed by one of these students.

It might seem that such factual writing would be very dull and uninteresting and exceptionally difficult to grade. I cannot pretend that every report my students submit arouses my enthusiasm, but most of them do. I enjoy reading how an Electrical Engineering student designed a $50 device consisting of a Pringles can, a clock motor, and a simple radio circuit to record the weather maps Washington broadcasts to weather stations across the country. I thought it was interesting enough to send in to *Scientific American* for possible publication. A Chemical Engineer's report on the potential dangers of polychlorinated biphenyls, PCB's for short, certainly caught my attention, as did a demonstration of voice transmission down the beam of light produced by a laser, rather than down a wire.

But the important point is that, for me at least, such factual writing is much easier to evaluate and grade than are judgmental interpretations of literature commonly assigned in both courses labeled "composition" and in courses labeled "literature." When an English teacher, that is a trained one, not someone like me, asks a student to write an evaluation or a critical analysis of a piece of literature, the teacher creates a situation in which the *less* informed is writing for the *more* informed, the *less* experienced in writing for the *more* experienced. In real life communication normally flows in the opposite direction, from those who know to those who do not.

Whenever I, pretending to be well informed about literature, assign a literary analysis to a class of students who presumably knows less about it than I do, I often find it a difficult task to explain to less diffident students why I gave them the grades I did—which always seem to them to be too low.

This may well be due to my lack of training in English, but I have heard my better trained colleagues also engaged in disputations with students who fail to understand why the analysis of a short story or drama that they have submitted, although relatively free of grammatical and syntactic errors, fails to meet the instructor's standards for a better than merely average paper. The answer is, of course, that the student's arguments failed to persuade the instructor because the instructor is older, more widely read, and more experienced in evaluating human motives from verbal and non-verbal cues. Perhaps just as important, the student does not have a Ph.D. in English, so *nothing* he could write would completely satisfy the instructor. I add this last comment from my own sad experience; nothing I have ever written about literature has been, in the eyes of my colleagues, worth more than a C-. But come to think of it, nothing written by anyone else in my department, even with an English Ph.D., has ever been rated better than a B either; so maybe there is hope if I keep working at it.[1]

There is another reason. Analytical judgments of human motivation and character are likely to be strongly influenced by the cultural backgrounds on either side of the instructor's desk. If these backgrounds are different, if the teacher comes from one background, the student from another, the teacher may well have a very difficult task in justifying the contention that his or her judgment in a particular case is

superior to the student's. For example, when I spent a year teaching in the Muslim country of Pakistan, I never could persuade the majority of my students that the American female college student was not a loose woman with the morals of a mink. The Pakistani students triumphantly pointed to copies of *Time* and *Newsweek* where American coeds were photographed *not wearing veils.*

Moreover, from the student's point of view—that is, from the point of view of the fellow who is going to have to do the hard work of the actual writing—it is a lot easier to handle facts than it is to handle evaluations. To evaluate means to compare, and you can only compare something with something you already know. And simply because he is young, the average high school senior or college freshman knows comparatively little. He is 17 or 18 years old and has been required by state law to spend two-thirds of his life in the classroom; he has been forbidden to marry, to hold any but the most menial jobs, and only on his 18th birthday will he be permitted to join the august company of voting adults. To ask him to judge the character and motives of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, a 56-year old, thrice-married, general and dictator, is asking a good deal. The number of persons of like attributes he has met is fairly limited.

But it is not asking too much of him to have him describe the changes that have taken place in his home country between the years 1960 and 1970. All he needs for this are facts and numbers and those are in such abundance that the problem is not how to find them but how to deal with them all. He can start with the U.S. Census Reports which will tell him not only about the people, but also about their housing, their transportation, and their agriculture. The Rand-McNally Commercial Atlas will count the number of drugstores and supermarkets for him. The Bureau of Labor Statistics will count the jobs and employment figures; the Federal Communications Commission, the radio and TV stations; the U.S. Forest Service, the trees and lumber produced; and so on almost ad infinitum.

Given this mountain of facts the student will be faced with the job of analyzing and synthesizing them into a digestible whole. But analysis and synthesis are, as Benjamin Bloom points out in his *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives,* easier to accomplish than evaluation, the highest level of intellectual activity.

Even the professional writer finds it easier to deal with facts. As Brendan Gill says in *Here At The New Yorker:*

> In my experience, the risk of failure in writing fiction is far greater than the risk of failure in writing all the different sorts of pieces that we lump together under the word "fact" . . .
>
> . . . in the writing of fact the seasoned writer nearly always knows at the outset what his chances are. The terrain lies open before him; he can see precisely where he is and where he means to go. . . . One has only to remain steadfast to one's purpose and to tamper as little as possible with the weight of the facts . . . work, work, and the thing is done.
>
> The writing and reading of fiction require strong convictions as well as strong emotions, and this is a time when we find it easier to respond to the social, political, and economic problems besetting man than to lofty speculations about his nature. The great abstractions—God, ourselves as an act of special creation, the hereafter—upon which, however indirectly, the fiction of the past was based, have become irrelevant for most of us and, for some of us, simply do not exist.

For these reasons I suggest that critical, judgmental essays about literature are not the most direct and effective ways to teach students how to communicate effectively in writing. This does not mean that such essays are useless; indeed, they undoubtedly serve as effective testing devices to determine whether or not the student has actually read the literature he was assigned to read. Moreover, the *correctness* of the student's writing—his spelling, grammar, and sentence construction—can be effectively criticized and thus improved through essays of this type. But correctness should be a *sine qua non*: good writing requires more than mere correctness; it requires an appropriate choice and arrangement of evidence, a proper selection of issues, and above all it requires *style*. And it seems to me that we learn style by imitation, by being exposed to good style. And this is best accomplished by reading good literature. So I am a strong supporter of courses in literature, although I would tend to urge the literature teacher to assign extensive reading lists, to let each author speak for himself, intruding only as necessary to elucidate puzzling features of the story, to advertise other, equally interesting stories beyond the assigned reading, and to avoid hours spent in pursuing symbols and dissecting single works for their critical values. My own high school English teacher, the late Leonard Rice at Hill School did this when he taught drama. Dramas to him were simply good stories. I recall to this day my delight and surprised discovery that the school library contained whole shelves of dramas that Rice had mentioned in passing. Here was a feast spread out before me, and I fell upon it like a glutton.

But back to composition. You are more interested in what I think I would do if I were not to start over again and begin teaching composition in a seconday school.

The first thing I would worry about is student motivation. Good writing requires work, hard work; and anyone who works hard would like to see his effort recognized—recognized, not merely rewarded. As an editorial consultant I have sometimes been paid to write explanations of new engineering devices or techniques. Although I appreciated the money, the experience has often been frustrating because my work has been recognized—that is, commented on—only by the one or two people whose device or technique I was explaining. How it was received by the ultimate reader, I only learned second hand from passing comments like, "Oh yes, they liked it fine." These reports were not published in any national journal, so I did not even have the satisfaction of seeing my name in print. A writer whose hours of labor receive so little attention is bound to feel the same sense of loss as Echo felt when jealous Hera condemned her never to speak for herself. As you all know, Echo withered away.

And this same sense of loss must inevitably be felt by the student who spends hours working on a paper only to have it read by a single person, the composition instructor, who will reward him with a grade, but who cannot provide the public recongition that means so much more. Meanwhile, similar effort spent on the football field, in play rehearsals, practicing with the band or orchestra, *will* provide public recognition, even if there is no other reward. So if the student puts in more time on extra-curricular activities than he does on writing themes, it is scarcely surprising.

For this reason I would seek to design a composition course which required the students to produce factual papers, rather than judgmental ones, which will be recognized as well as rewarded.

My engineering students already produce factual papers, as I have explained. But they get recognition too. At the end of the term each one gives a 10-minute lecture on his paper topic and the general public, all the professors in the College of Engineering, and the student's friends and relatives are invited to attend. Moreover, these lectures are recorded on video-tape and played on Ann Arbor's Cable TV network and later placed in the University Library where anyone can view them. The prospect of being put on public display this way seems to me to motivate these students very strongly, perhaps especially because I invited two members of this audience, an engineer and a non-engineer, to recommend the final grade the student should receive for his written and oral report, and thus for the entire semester's work.

Now such a system might work at the college level, but could it be adapted to fit a high school class? I believe it could, but the topics for papers would naturally have to be different.

I should think that the controversial public issues of the type normally selected as propositions for your high school debating teams would serve this purpose admirably. Every city council and state legislature has dozens of such controversial bills introduced in each session, most of them generating strong feelings, and your councilman, state legislator, or local League of Women Voters can easily provide you with more than enough such issues to occupy your students. Moreover, everyone likes to hear a good, knock-down-drag-out argument. But I would modify the customary debate team format which seems to me to emphasize the rapid recitation of the greatest possible number of evidence cards in the shortest possible time in order to impress a single debate judge in the back of the room. You simply can't hold the attention of, let alone persuade, an audience of any size this way. I would limit each speaker to one speech about 10-minutes long, and at the conclusion of these prepared remarks would open the floor to questions from the audience. And I would ask the audience, not merely a single judge, to decide who wins by calling for a division of the house on the proposition itself, not on the quality of the speakers. Some people will abstain if you merely ask for a show of hands; they can't if they are required to move. And as I do with my own students, I would ask two members of the audience to read the students' written arguments, as well as listen to their speeches, and recommend their final grade in the course.

The collecting of the evidence for such an argument is not a difficult task, and I have a technique for library research which enables one of my classes to produce something like a 50-page annotated bibliography on almost any topic in one week. But this is the subject for another paper altogether.

But if you don't like debate and argument, I think there are other sorts of topics which would lend themselves to the same sort of public written and oral performance and thus recognition and motivation. There are all sorts of local, civic issues about which the public is poorly informed, not because the news media neglects them, but because the stories about them occurr over scattered intervals of time and no one bothers to produce a comprehensive analysis which can be easily digested. For example, as I write this the *Ann Arbor News* is running a full two-column public notice about a proposed change in a drainage district. The facts are all there, but in legal language, like,

> Commencing at the South ¼ corner of Section, 25, T2S, R5E, Scio Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, thence S 88 deg.- 32 min.- 10 sec. E 365.03 feet long

the south line of said section for a Place of Beginning; thence N 5 deg.- 31 min.-20 sec. E 835.30 feet . . .

Two solid newspaper columns of this, and all completely incomprehensible to me and to most average readers; yet it might be of very great concern to me if I understood it. Here is the sort of topic that I think any high school student could clarify with a little effort, and I would be interested in hearing how he explained it and I suspect other people in Ann Arbor would too.

In the *Scientific American* of September 1972, Peter Goldmark, inventor of the long playing record and the first practical color television, discusses "Communication and the Community" and points out that there are surprisingly few effective communiction channels between city officials and the community and vice-versa. He suggests that several community information centers be set up to which citizens might refer to find out where to go to get the information or the service they need. Information brochures on the wide variety of services the average city provides would be needed, and here is the sort of thing high school students could prepare and for which they could receive recognition.

In conclusion, if I were once again teaching secondary school composition, I would emphasize factual papers because they are easier for the student to handle, because they can be immediately relevant to the society in which the student lives, and because they lend themselves to the public recognition which every writer instinctively seeks.

NOTES

[1]At long last the reasons for my inadequacy have been explained. It is clear that I have failed to master "critical prose." I only understood this after reading:
Carkeet, David, "How Critics Write and How Students Write," *College English*, Vol. 37, No. 6, February 1976, pp. 599-604

FROM A READING DESK

VINCENT GILLESPIE
Kansas State University

Cooper, Charles R. and Odell, Lee, *Evaluating Writing: Describing Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging*. National Council of Teachers of English (Urbana, Illinois), 1977. (NCTE #16221) ($5.75/members $4.50)

Cooper and Odell did well in bringing together the six essays that make up *Evaluating Writing*. The essays, presented in earlier drafts at the 1975 San Diego Conference on Describing Writing and Measuring Growth in Writing, are diverse in treatment and serve as excellent summaries of current research, especially of that employing holistic rating techniques. The volume will serve writing program administrators and researchers in composition by describing responsible composition rating techniques that are sound alternatives to current standardized objective tests of writing skills. More importantly, the essays offer the classroom teacher at all levels a variety of new approaches to motivating student writers, examining their written work, and measuring the immediate and long-term results of that work.

Charles Cooper's "Holistic Evaluation of Writing" introduces the volume and describes the most prevalent types of holistic evaluation used today. In part developed to avoid the deficiencies of objective, standardized "editorial-skills" tests so widely used today and, in part, developed to give the classroom teacher or researcher greater insight into the intricacies of the creative act that writing is, holistic scoring techniques facilitate the teacher's attempts to isolate and concentrate upon a student's specific writing problems. Cooper describes seven types of holistic evaluation: essay scale, "center of gravity" response, dichotomous scale, feature analysis, primary trait scoring, general impression marking, and analytic scale, and examines the latter at length. His descriptions cite the advantages and methodologies of each and argue persuasively for the reliability of impressionistic "factor" rating as a means of determining writers' relative performances.

Richard Lloyd-Jones "Primary Trait Serving," perhaps the most difficult of the six essays for the non-specialist to appreciate fully, is an extended description and discussion of a rating technique that allows the researcher or classroom teacher to isolate the inherent crucial characteristics of specific types of writing and to identify the relative success of writers in their attempts to achieve those characteristics. When used to measure the writing skills of large numbers of students, primary trait scoring is a more valid measure of student performance that are standardized tests. When used by a teacher for the formative evaluation of an individual student's work, the technique gives greater and more helpful direction to the student than do the usual margin marking techniques and allows the teacher to focus the student's attention on the more important characteristics of effective writing. Lloyd-Jones' discussion is complete enough to allow a researcher or administrator to engage in extensive measurement projects.

"Computer-Aided Description of Mature Word Choices in Writing," the contribution of Patrick Finn, posits the potentiality of examining student writing by comparing student lexical choices to word frequency lists categorized by subject matter and writer age grouping. Though less a report of research than a discussion of

the technique's usefulness, the essay does much to note rather sophisticated perceptions concerning writers' word choices and the relationship between rhetoric and topic. Of immediate concern to formative evaluation is the techniques' applicability to questions of essay coherence, unity, and focus, for it allows the teacher and student to consider such questions on the basis of finite and concrete lexical matters rather than on the more elusive questions of "rhetorical" relationships. A severe drawback to the technique's wide-spread application, however, is that it requires technologically sophisticated resources.

In "Early Blooming and Late Blooming Syntactic Structures," Kellogg Hunt reviews recent studies that confirm his research of the mid-1960's on the relationship between syntactic fluency and the formal teaching of sentence combining techniques. In addition to describing briefly and generally a method of teaching sentence combining, Hunt emphasizes the demonstrated relationship between syntactic fluency and maturity of style and the effect of sentence-combining on both. The technique can measure the relative development of a writer's ability to write and to conceptualize and can, additionally, be employed to evaluate curricula development and effectiveness.

Lee Odell's "Measuring Changes in Intellectual Processes as One Dimension of Growth in Writing" discusses the advantages to teacher and student of examining the strategies (made manifest by syntax, diction, and organization) by which students explore and present ideas and feelings. The techniques are valuable for diagnosis, growth measurement, and formative evaluation and, used conscientiously by student and teacher, they seem a likely antidote to vague, soporific topic development.

The text's last essay, Mary Beaven's "Individualized Goal Setting, Self-Evaluation, and Peer Evaluation" is a most useful and comprehensive assessment of research that examines the values and techniques of involving students in a manner that stimulates their critical capabilities, increases their enthusiasm to improve their writing, and generates a vital regard for defined goals. Of significant value is Beaven's recognition that techniques of self and peer evaluation are grounded in realistic premises and assumptions regarding the nature of the writing process and the means by which it can be directed. The essay outlines a general, practical year-long program that can be implemented in the classroom.

Evaluating Writing is not the best title for this collection, for it suggests a series of essays limited to the concerns of judging student writing. Clearly, the techniques described can do that well and are an acceptable answer to standardized objective writing skills tests, and for that reason they should be examined by curricula evaluators and researchers. But the text goes well beyond that. It is impressive in its near constant emphasis on describing techniques that can bring sensible, effective teaching to the classroom. New ways of defining writing goals, of creating stimulating writing projects, of analyzing written compositions, and of involving students will all do much to bring the students back to meaningful basics in a manner that will prove satisfying to responsible, committed classroom teachers. Examined closely, the essays reveal a commitment that recognizes clearly that the composition teacher cannot approach the task casually or dilettantishly. The composition class must concern itself with writing as a constant engagement. It must examine that writing as the product which it is — a serious expression of a human intellect in the throes of becoming. And,

too, the composition classroom must, finally, engage the writer in a manner that leads to his enthusiastic pursuit of intellectual and humane maturity. *Evaluating Writing* outlines the steps in that direction, and they go far beyond the concerns of judging student writing. Indeed, they can make that writing worthy of judgment.

FROM THE STATE SPECIALIST'S DESK

LOIS CAFFYN
State Department of Education

From continuing efforts by school districts to build continuity and progression into their composition programs, a number of apparent truths have surfaced. They have become evident from teacher and administrator questions, from issues that arise in group discussion, and from considerations that develop in the organization and process of curriculum planning itself. They are different in type but nearly simultaneous and so interrelated as to be difficult to present in consecutive order.

First, it can be done. A local K-12 language arts committee, with informed but largely nondirective leadership, can build into the writing program some degree of continuity and progression to replace the often shapeless repetition from year to year. Teacher imagination adds the challenge. This is not to say that learning to write is a step-by-step mastering of clearly identifiable skills, but such a plan does have the possibility of moving the learners forward according to their developing abilities and interests. Interests are included here — although they are in the affective domain — because they often give observable evidence of, as well as built-in motivation toward the development of, sprouting abilities.

Second, it must focus on student competence. It is one thing to teach. It is quite another to be responsible for the students' learning what one teaches. While all real teachers are concerned about their students' learning, most of them talk and write in terms of material to be covered and the activities and processes they require of students in studying it. Many have never thought of the competencies toward which all this teaching should lead. Some do not even want to think or talk about them.

Neither do they wish to face squarely that they can teach only cognitive and psychomotor learnings directly. The attitudinal behaviors — which teachers so desperately want for their students for the rest of their lives — the students must catch from the ways caring teachers teach the cognitive learnings and from the ease with which they can use their learned competencies. Most teachers would like to teach the attitudes directly and find it traumatic to discover in the group planning process that they cannot. Once they begin, however, to identify the teachable elements that form the bases for creative and affective behaviors, they proceed with enthusiasm.

Third, it is slow and exhausting. Improving the program is a matter of curriculum planning and articulation, not of games and gimmicks, for it often entails changes in teacher — and administrator — thinking. Changing one's own way of thinking about any familiar subject or issue is usually slow and painful even though a bit of insight may come in a flash. Perhaps all self-determination is slow and painful for it carries with it the effort of analyzing a situation and alternatives, the responsibility of deciding, and the living with the consequences of those decisions. Deciding what students could and should be able to write that is beyond the previous level, but not too far, can be disturbing. Behavior modification by edict might be faster and more efficient. Only a free people has the power to give away its discussion and decision power. Teachers and communities can give their power to government, to colleges, to textbook publishers, or to public whim until they come to believe in what they are

required to do; or they can suffer through self-determination. The games and gimmicks provide a variety of means to accomplish these ends.

Fourth, it must be supported by both teachers and the school administration. Support includes time, encouragement, and compensation. It may be a stronger effort if it is initiated by teachers and encouraged by administrators. To date, administrative edict has not been very effective, but tactful approaches to individual teachers sometimes work well. The genuine involvement of teachers — or lack of it — becomes apparent within the committee. Continuing administrative support is less evident. Administrators need to make their belief in the project apparent to the committee and to others continually and consistently. If teachers feel that their administrators have lost interest before the project is complete or that they really had not intended anything but lip service from the beginning, the dedicated teachers plod on with a sense of futility.

Fifth, it requires a sense of mission — not a religious mission but a moral mission. If educators believe that each individual life has a right to become the best it can be with the effort its owner is willing to exert, then it is the business of liberal education literally to lead out — e ducere — or liberate the self and the intellect from enslaving ignorance in so far as is possible. Teachers themselves continue in the process of becoming freed from limitations also. When they have learned that writing is a means of learning as well as an expression of learning, they will find the teaching of writing a moral commitment.

Sixth, it must express acceptance of the lay public's concept of the second "R" as well as the school standards for composition. It must consider alternative and/or combined types and styles of writing as valid.

The background of practice in expanding and elaborating writing provides invaluable resources from which the student/adult may choose the words and arrangements best suited to any given purpose and to the probable reader. The elaborate and the spare are both styles in writing, and the difference does not comprise a moral issue. Skill in each contributes to the possible effectiveness of the other. The student/adult, then, needs to be freed from ignorance of or slavery to either.

The curriculum planning committee needs to realize also that for many members of the general public — who pay the money for schools — spelling is writing. The committee should plan for that concept.

Seventh, it must have K-12 teamwork. Any part of this vertical range that falls within the jurisdiction of the public school working separately cannot provide other than a patch on the total program. It seems foredoomed to less than real success because it does not mesh with other parts and because it continues to attempt to deal with existing problems, some of which might be minimized or even eliminated if teachers of the entire K-12 program planned it together as a continuum. In order to search out (1) consensus about desirable language competencies students need by exit from high school, (2) common problems and knowledge, and (3) emphases at various levels based on stages of student growth leading to those desirable ends, it is necessary for the curriculum planning members to talk together as a committee-of-the-whole until they bring out questions and concerns and find points of agreement or com-

promise. Any attempted shortcut to decisions or any segmentation of the group before that stage has been reached tends to scuttle the entire effort.

Reasoning together tends to allay traditional fears, prejudices, and misunderstandings-by-rumor and to replace them with a new understanding of the work at different levels and with a new respect for the importance of every stage linking the program into a progressive continuum.

Without this teamwork, all the other characteristics of a productive effort to form a composing program with continuity and progression may be to no avail. The collection of individuals should meld into a team within the first half dozen sessions, with each member feeling personally reluctant to miss both hearing what everyone else says and making his/her own contributions. It is in the K-12 team that teachers examine their own beliefs, their own values, and their own practices as teachers of composing. It is here that they come to new thinking and awareness. It is here that they themselves write again, agonizing as their students do over finding just the right choice and order of words to say what they wish.

It is from this effort that improved writing programs evolve.

CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT DATES

1978

Feb. 16-18	Southeastern Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College, Nashville, Tennessee. Host: Volunteer State Community College
Feb. 23-25	Midwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College, Chicago, Illinois. Host: College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, Illinois
March 10-12	National Conference on Language Arts in the Elementary School, Indianapolis, Indiana
March 16-18	Conference on English Education, Minneapolis, Minnesota
March 30-April 1	Conference on College Composition and Communication, Denver, Colorado
March 31-April 1	Annual KATE English Roundtables and Executive Board Meeting, Wichita
April 7-8	Secondary School English Conference, Dallas, Texas
Nov. 23-25	NCTE 68th Annual Convention, Kansas City, Missouri (Pre-convention activities November 20-22.